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## The position of grammar in Finnish, Dutch, and global course books for German as a foreign language

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# The position of grammar in Finnish, Dutch, and global course books for German as a foreign language

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## Abstract

Communicative language teaching and language teaching research suggest forms for desirable and effective grammar teaching. This study investigates to what extent these suggestions are integrated into teaching materials. On the basis of prior studies, we developed a list of both qualitative and quantitative criteria to determine the position of grammar in foreign language course books. This list was then applied to course books for German as a foreign language that are used in Finland and the Netherlands to examine the role grammar plays in these materials. Our results show that many similarities exist between the Dutch, Finnish, and global course books with regard to the location and integration of grammar, and the instructional approach adopted. However, a striking difference was found in the Finnish materials: they provide more grammar exercises and generally a lower progression rate than the Dutch and global materials. We relate this to the typological distance between German and Finnish. In general, even though the analysed teaching materials all follow the rationale behind communicative language teaching, they are traditional in the sense that grammar inhabits a prominent position in the course books. On the other hand, we have observed pedagogical innovations with respect to grammar teaching, such as inductive grammar presentation, a spread of the learning load as well as self-evaluation tools for learners.

## Keywords

foreign language teaching, German, grammar, teaching materials, textbook evaluation

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## I Introduction

In the present-day communicative approach, students are prepared to use the foreign language in every-day communicative contexts (e.g. Littlewood, 2011; McDonough & Shaw, 2012; Savignon, 2005). Teachers use not only traditional explicit-deductive grammar instruction but also expose their students to inductive and implicit types of instruction. However, the effectiveness of teaching grammar to support language learning is under debate (e.g. Ellis, 2006). It seems that form-focused instruction, whether in a focus-on-form or focus-on-forms approach, generally is effective when embedded in communicative activities (Ellis, 2005, 2006, 2009; Funk, 2014; Newby, 2014). Still, grammar inhabits a dominant position in German as a foreign language (GFL) teaching and testing (Van Tolie, 2015; West & Verspoor, 2016; Zimmermann, 1984, 1990), and in teaching materials (Tammenga-Helmantel, 2012), and this is not restricted to German (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 160; Harmer & Thornbury, 2014).

From the literature we know that teaching materials are extremely guiding in what happens in classrooms and for the curriculum (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; Luke, de Castell & Luke, 1989). What we do not know is whether materials present grammar in a way which is expected, desirable and/or useful. Expectations and usefulness issues are partly context-dependent, i.e. determined by a particular language teaching approach, and they are nurtured by insights from for instance language learning and teaching research. More concrete, teaching foreign languages with communicative goals might lead to expectations concerning, for instance, the amount of grammar. Moreover, research on grammar instruction might provide an answer to the effectiveness of inductive and deductive grammar instruction or the relevance of integrating grammar into productive skills exercises to reach communicative objectives. In essence, we need an analysis that reveals whether teaching materials provide grammar in such a way that they foster effective foreign language (FL) learning and help the teacher in the teaching process. Such an in-depth analysis of teaching materials is especially useful in contexts without admission procedures for course books or which lack central guidance with respect to the curriculum and in which commercial publishing houses determine the content of teaching materials. Analyses like these can clarify whether the doubts and worries about possibly conflicting interests and, related to this, the quality of teaching materials (e.g. Gray, 2013) are justified.

Our research offers a tool to enable a systematic study of grammar in teaching materials. We provide a list of criteria based on prior evaluation studies and apply it in our analysis of the Dutch and Finnish GFL course books for secondary education. Comparing teaching materials from different countries places the results in a broader perspective. A comparison between Finland and the Netherlands is especially interesting because of the similar teaching conditions but different linguistic context: Both countries have adopted a communicative approach to FL teaching, lack an admission procedure for teaching materials, and employ only very general central curriculum guidelines. However, they differ in the typological distance between L1 and the target language, i.e. German. The present study investigates to what extent this factor influences the position of grammar in teaching materials.

The analysis includes Dutch, Finnish, and global GFL course books for adolescent learners (A0–A2) available in the Netherlands and Finland to give a complete picture of

grammar in course books in these countries. Our list of criteria is, however, constructed in such a way that it can also be applied to FL teaching materials in other L1 contexts and for foreign languages other than German.

## II Previous studies on investigating grammar in FL textbooks

Four GFL studies have more or less recently appeared on the grammatical component in course books. First, Kwakernaak (1996) presents a qualitative overview of the development grammar has undergone in grammar-translation, audiolingualism, and the communicative approach using the following criteria: exercise types, grammar progression, the amount of grammar per grammatical structure, and the instructional approach. He observes that communicative teaching materials tend to display more variation regarding the exercise types and provide less grammar structures and more exercises dedicated to the grammar introduced. As for portioning, Kwakernaak takes note of a tendency he coins *Entzerrung*, where a grammar topic is introduced in smaller portions and not in one large block. With respect to sequence, he finds a shift from nominal to verbal morphology as the starting issues in German grammar teaching, and a change in the sequence of introducing tense morphology, from present < past < perfect to present < perfect < past.

Second, Maijala (2010) analyses two Finnish (*Einverstanden 1/2*, *Fahrplan 1/2*) and two global (*Themen 1/2 aktuell*, *Passwort Deutsch 1/2*) CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) A1–A2 GFL course books for adult learners and uses three criteria: grammar progression (including portioning), instructional approach, and grammar exercise types. Maijala concludes that Finnish and global materials introduce the same grammar issues and that the order in which these issues are presented displays many similarities although possessive pronouns are introduced early on in the global course books and relatively late in Finnish materials. Moreover, Finnish textbooks tend to introduce a grammatical phenomenon as a block, whereas global materials present a new topic in portions. Regarding instructional approach, she concludes that grammar is introduced both inductively and deductively. Finally, Maijala observes that the majority of the exercises are reproductive in nature (fill-in-the-blanks exercises) and/or stimulate recognition (underlining, subcategorization, marking). Only few productive or reflective exercises are found (similar results were obtained by Maijala & Tammenga-Helmantel, 2017). Analysing all grammar exercises for their type might give a more exact picture of grammar in materials, but as Maijala (2010, p. 35) herself indicates, the numbers per type are not to be interpreted as absolute but are to be understood merely as tendencies. This criterion therefore does not provide the necessary detailed information.

Third, Aguado (2012) investigates grammar progression in five global textbooks (*Studio d*, *Berliner Platz*, *Logisch*, *Optimal*, and *Geni@l*) and observes the following: (1) Both S-V and *wh*-V-S verb patterns are found in the beginning, (2) separable verbs (the so-called *Verbklammer*) and modal verbs are introduced about the same time, (3) modal verbs are introduced before perfect tense, and (4) no uniformity is found for the relative order of past and perfect tense. Concerning portioning, Aguado shows that modals tend to be introduced in portions and not as a block, which confirms Maijala's above-mentioned observation.

Finally, Tammenga-Helmantel (2012) analyses five Dutch textbooks for adolescent learners (CEFR level A1–A2): *Na Klar*, *Neue Kontakte*, *Mach's gut*, *Salzgitter heute*, and *TrabiTour*. She uses both qualitative and quantitative criteria, namely, grammar progression (including portioning), instructional approach, integration of grammar in skill-focused exercises, the number of grammatical structures introduced, the number of grammar exercises, and the number of repetition exercises per grammatical topic.

The Dutch course materials show a varied picture regarding portioning, instructional approach, and integration. Likewise, the quantitative criteria reveal differences between the Dutch teaching materials: The number of grammar structures introduced ranges from 62 to 86, and the percentage of grammar exercises ranges from 13.5 to 25.0%. In addition, the amount of repetition varies considerably. Since repetition exercises generally consist of a number of different grammar structures, counting the number of repetition exercises per grammar structure gives a distorted picture of the amount of repetition.

### III Design and research questions

To determine the position of grammar in teaching materials, we have decided to integrate all the criteria found in the above-discussed studies and exclude those criteria that raised practical or validity problems like ‘exercise type’ and ‘repetition’. However, qualitative information on recycling will be provided when describing the location of grammar. In addition, ‘sequence’, although an interesting criterion from a language acquisition perspective (see Tammenga-Helmantel & Maijala, 2018), is excluded from our analysis since it only indirectly relates to the aim of our study, namely determining the position of grammar. This leads to the following criteria:

- location and integration of grammar;
- instructional approach;
- number of grammar structures;
- number of grammar exercises;
- portioning.

We will not only compare the teaching materials according to these criteria but we will also investigate to what extent the materials present grammar in a way that is in line with communicative language teaching (CLT) and with research insights concerning effective grammar learning and teaching. Strictly speaking, CLT does not explicate the position of grammar or prescribe ideal teaching techniques but can rather be considered a ‘generalized “umbrella” term’ for FL teaching which aims ‘to improve the students’ ability to communicate’ (Harmer, 2007, p. 70; see also Celce-Murcia, 2014, p. 8). Harmer (2007) describes a communicative continuum which is to its right hand clearly learner-centered and focused on content and fluency – less on form and accuracy.

Grammar teaching should not stop at the conceptual stage (‘knowing grammar’) but should include real-life language processing activities at the performance stage (‘using grammar’) (Newby, 2014, p. 9). Based on insights from applied linguistics, cognitive

psychology and educational neuroscience, Newby (2014) argues that the latter type of exercises are more active, deeper, cognitively challenging, and formative in nature (p. 13). Likewise, Funk (2014) pleads for pragmatic goal-oriented exercises with communicative relevance; the learner should train linguistic structures in exercises with an easily identifiable relation to a communicatively useful context (p. 191). Importantly, learners must be able to use language and grammar exercises should prepare them in free and controlled production (Ellis, 2005, p. 209), focusing both on form and meaning (Ellis, 2009; see also Boers et al., 2017). Ellis states that ‘Instruction needs to ensure that learners are able to connect grammatical forms to the meaning they realize in communication’ (Ellis, 2006, p. 101). Accordingly, we expect productive, communicative tasks and integration of grammar into these tasks. For instance, a grammar structure is practiced in blanks exercises but is essentially also elicited in a speaking exercise to foster noticing and/or automation of a grammar rule in a communicative context.

CLT focuses on content and fluency, less on form and accuracy. Beginners are expected to display a restricted mastery of some simple grammar constructions and sentence patterns (A1) or use certain simple constructions but with systematic elementary mistakes (A2) (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 29). We therefore expect a moderate number of grammar structures (and exercises) in the selected A1–A2 course books.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, empirical classroom-based studies confirm the effectiveness of both (traditional) deductive and guided inductive grammar instruction (Jean & Simard, 2013; Shaffer, 1989; Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2016). Presenting grammar inductively matches a learner-centered approach to FL teaching: It is the learner who constructs linguistic knowledge by inducing grammar rules from linguistic input. Likewise, presenting grammar in a learnable amount, for instance, by portioning thus reducing the learning load, takes the learner seriously. These research insights and the adopted learner-centered approach suggest a portioned introduction of grammar, using both inductive and deductive instruction.

Against this background, this study addresses the following questions:

- Research question 1: How is grammar presented regarding location and integration, instructional approach, number of grammar structures, number of grammar exercises, and portioning?
- Research question 2: What are the observed differences and/or parallels between Dutch, Finnish and global course books?

## IV Method

### *I Teaching materials*

This project includes all GFL course books available on the Finnish and Dutch market (as of 2015) for beginners (A0–A2), approximately 13–15 years of age. In order to select the global course books most commonly used in the Netherlands, we consulted the Goethe Institut Amsterdam. Furthermore, we added *Team Deutsch*, originally a global course book but now regionalized for Dutch secondary education. This selection procedure results into the following list of course materials:

- Dutch course materials:
  - Na Klar!
  - Neue Kontakte
  - Salzgitter heute
  - TrabiTour
  - Mach's gut
- Finnish course materials:
  - Studio Deutsch
  - Super
  - Echt!
  - Kompass Deutsch Neu
- Global course materials:
  - Planet
  - Geni@l
  - Team Deutsch [Dutch edition]

We have opted for the course books for HAVO secondary education, which corresponds more or less to 'average' level for secondary education in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, we can compare the Dutch materials with the Finnish and global books, which lack a sub-classification according to educational level, but which do specify CEFR levels, namely A1–A2. This selection intends to give a complete picture of the course books used in Finland and the Netherlands. The limitations of our selection are dealt with in Section VI.

The analysed teaching materials are structured differently (for cultural differences in teaching materials' construction and implementation, see Harwood, 2013). The Dutch and Finnish GFL teaching materials consist of a textbook, an exercise book, and occasionally a CD for students and extra digital materials, which are sometimes available at extra charge. The textbook contains reading texts, vocabulary lists and a reference grammar. The exercise book presents grammar and exercises. On the other hand, the analysed global textbooks present text, grammar and exercises, and a workbook is available as a supplementary aid. This workbook is often seen as an optional extra, whereas the Dutch and Finnish workbooks are an essential part of learning in both the FL classroom and at home. In our analysis, we refer to books which do and do not contain exercises as workbooks and textbooks, respectively.

A note on the development of course materials in Finland and the Netherlands is in place here. In both countries, commercial publishing houses have a free hand to develop teaching materials, and there are no admission procedures for course books. They determine content and sequences in the materials to reach the communicative goals as they are formulated at a national level. The Dutch government does not prescribe a language-teaching curriculum but merely provides very general core curriculum standards for secondary education for reading, listening, writing, speaking (at CEFR levels), and literature (CVE, 2012, pp. 24–25). Grammar is not mentioned in these core curriculum standards. The Finnish core curriculum gives the framework for the structure of studies and objectives, core content, and general assessment criteria for each subject. The core content for grammar is defined as follows: 'sentence formation and main grammatical principles characteristic of the language in question, from the standpoint of communication' (Finnish National Board of Education, 2003, p. 147).

## 2 Criteria

In the following, we define how each criterion is measured.

*a The location, recycling, and integration of grammar.* We determine where grammar is found in the materials and whether this grammar is generally treated in isolation or integrated into language proficiency exercises. In addition, we show how introduced grammar structures are recycled in each book.

*b Instructional approach.* We determine per grammar topic whether books simply present the rule (deductive) or whether they guide learners to find the grammar rule (inductive) and count the number of inductive and deductive introductions.

*c Number of grammar structures.* We count the number of grammar structures introduced in each book adopting the fine-grained linguistic classification by Tammenga-Helmantel (2012).

*d Number of grammar exercises.* We determine both the total number of exercises and the number of grammar exercises for each workbook. To enable a comparison between the workbooks, we adopt the working definitions from Tammenga-Helmantel (2012): (1) an exercise is a coherent task which consists of eight to twelve items, and (2) an exercise is regarded a grammar exercise when it is language-oriented and practices a morpho-syntactic feature (from Bouwens & Oud-De Glas, 1991, p. 147).

*e Portioning.* We examine a selection of grammar phenomena, namely those structures that have been considered relevant in earlier studies (see Section II): modals, prepositions, pronouns, and adjective declination. To see whether the concept ‘portioning’ has been adopted, we count in how many parts these grammar structure are introduced. We include present and past tense form of modals and distinguish between prepositions governing dative case, accusative case, and either dative or accusative case. Regarding pronouns, we include possessive pronouns and personal pronouns with nominative, accusative, and dative case marking. Finally, we distinguish between adjective with definite and indefinite articles, and adjectives without a determiner.

The Dutch materials were analysed by two researchers. Researcher 1 analysed all the books; researcher 2 explored two randomly selected chapters for each book. Their results were compared, displaying minimal variation (less than 5%). After analysing the first and the second book, calibration sessions were held to optimize the reliability. This analysis procedure was discussed and then adopted to the Finnish and global materials.

## V Results

### *Research question 1a: How is grammar presented regarding location, recycling, and integration?*

The common concept of Finnish teaching materials is that the textbook comprises non-authentic texts illustrating certain grammar structures and vocabulary. The grammar



structures are listed in the table of contents, and at the end of the textbook, there is a 'mini-grammar' with all structures introduced. Their Dutch counterparts also consist of a grammar overview and texts, which do not seem to be chosen on the basis of the grammar practiced but seem to be related to the chapter's topic (e.g. sports or hobbies). The global textbooks present an overview of the grammar introduced either at the end of the book (*Team Deutsch*, *Geni@l*) or after a block of four chapters (*Planet*). In addition to the textbooks, the workbooks cover grammar in various ways.

**a Dutch workbooks.** *Neue Kontakte*: Each chapter presents grammar in two blocks consisting of familiar ('Weißt du es noch?') and new grammar. New grammar is also recycled within the same chapter in a repetition section. Grammar is generally not integrated into productive communicative activities.

*Mach's gut*: Grammar exercises are found throughout a chapter practicing old and new grammar in blocks of one or two exercises. They do not seem to be related to the skills exercises; grammar is only incidentally integrated into speaking exercises.

*TrabiTour*: Grammar is presented in three or four small blocks per chapter. The first half of the chapter practices familiar grammar. New grammar is introduced and explicitly linked to related, familiar structures, e.g. new accusative personal pronouns are related to familiar nominative personal pronouns: 'You have learnt that the subject has nominative case. Personal pronouns can also appear with accusative case marking: as direct object or after a preposition assigning accusative case' (TT/C, p. 27). The end of each chapter repeats old and new grammar structures ('Grammatik: Wiederholung'). Grammar is integrated into productive exercises only twice.

*Salzgitter heute*: Each chapter provides grammar in two blocks with familiar ('Ich wiederhole') and new grammar, respectively. These blocks often practice related grammar structures, e.g. both have case marking with prepositions as their topic. The productive exercises are not related to the grammar practiced in the chapter.

*Na Klar*: Each chapter has a section exclusively devoted to grammar introducing two grammar structures. New grammar is recycled within the chapter two to four times, sometimes explicitly marked as 'Wiederholung'. Likewise, familiar grammar structures are repeated but no patterns could be discerned. Grammar and productive exercises are practiced in different sections and do not seem to be related.

**b Finnish workbooks.** *Echt!*: New grammar is generally treated in one or two blocks after practicing new vocabulary. Productive exercises relate to practiced grammar, which is made explicit in the instruction: 'Tell the story once again. Find new situations with your partner. Use the words given in the boxes. Remember also the use of accusative' (*Echt! 1 Übungen*, p. 115). Grammar structures are repeated in the section 'Rückspiegel' and in a separate section for self-assessment with CEFR style statements regarding grammatical competence, e.g. 'I can conjugate verbs in the present tense.'

*Kompass Deutsch Neu*: The workbook presents new grammar in several blocks and practices the grammar rule in productive exercises. Before the introduction of new grammar rules learners must revise related grammar structures. For instance, when learning modals *können* and *dürfen*, learners should repeat the conjugation of *mögen* that was presented before (*Kompass Deutsch Neu Übungen*, p. 66). There are also 'Do you remember' info boxes, which sometimes present grammar items. Extra revision

grammar exercises are provided at the end of the workbook. Learners regularly evaluate their grammatical competence in CEFR style can-do statements.

*Super:* Each chapter presents grammar in one or several blocks and then practices it in productive exercises. Students evaluate their grammar learning after each chapter and repeat the grammar structures after two chapters ('Kannst du das?'). At the beginning of the book, the grammar structures that were learned in the previous book are revised ('Sprachecke'). A 'mini-grammar' at the end of the workbook includes all the introduced grammar rules.

*Studio Deutsch:* New grammar rules are provided in one or several blocks per chapter and are practiced through productive exercises. The book starts with recycling familiar grammar; it re-activates already presented grammar. After three chapters, the rules are repeated and extra exercises are provided. When new grammar structures are introduced, learners are often advised to revise related familiar grammar using the grammar overview at the end of the workbook.

c *Global workbooks. Team Deutsch:* Grammar is introduced in small blocks and practiced in one section at the end of each chapter, but not exclusively there. The book recycles familiar grammar, both within a chapter ('Meine Grammatik') and across chapters. In the latter case, it tends to relate new to familiar structures. Although no explicit link is mentioned between grammar and productive exercises, sometimes integration can be observed, e.g. in exercises with guided dialogues.

*Planet:* Grammar is found throughout the chapter. Introduced grammar structures are repeated after two chapters ('Wiederholung'). Every fourth chapter presents a summary of the new grammar ('Grammatik'). Here the learner has to fill out grammar schemata and complement grammar rules: 'This way superlative is constructed: am + adjective + ... [and] In a subordinate clause the verb is always located at the ...' (Planet 2, p. 25). The productive exercises are sporadically explicitly related to the grammar presented in that chapter.

*Geni@l:* Grammar is found throughout the chapter and a summary is provided at the end of a unit. Introduced structures are recycled both within a chapter ('Das kann ich schon') and across chapters. The book offers a test section after every fourth chapter, repeating also grammar. Grammar and productive exercises seem to be related, but this is not made explicit.

To summarize, textbooks generally contain a 'mini-grammar' at the end of the book. In the rest of the textbook, we either find just texts (Dutch and Finnish) or a mix of texts and exercises, some of which focus on grammar (global). In the Finnish textbooks, the selection of texts seems to be determined by the grammar introduced. On the other hand, text selection in Dutch materials seems to be thematically inspired.

Striking differences in the workbooks concern the rate of integration and evaluation. First, Finnish and global teaching materials generally integrate grammar into productive exercises, though it is not always explicitly stated. In so doing, they provide grammar meaningfully in that grammar is not merely practiced in gap-fill exercises but also embedded in communicative activities (see Ellis, 2005, 2006, 2009; Funk, 2014; Newby, 2014). On the other hand, the productive exercises in Dutch workbooks only seldom relate to the grammar introduced in a certain chapter but seem to be connected to the chunks and the topic of a chapter. We conclude that the Dutch teaching materials prepare

the learners to use the target language communicatively but that by teaching grammar in isolation, that is without integration in productive skills exercises, its effectiveness can be doubted (see Boers et al., 2017). Second, only Finnish materials provide can-do statement exercises related to grammar, which is quite innovative.

To conclude, grammar practice in the analysed Finnish and global teaching aligns with CLT. Moreover, the Finnish self-assessment tools are in accord with learner-centered teaching and target-focused learning.

**Research question 1b: How is grammar presented regarding instructional approach?**

Table 1 provides an overview of the instructional approach chosen to introduce grammar. There is a wide range of variation between the instructional approaches of the books. The course books can be divided in roughly three categories: mainly deductive (*Mach's gut*, *Salzgitter heute*), mainly inductive (*Na Klar*, *Neue Kontakte*, *Team Deutsch*, *Planet*, *Studio Deutsch*, *Echt! Übungen*, *Kompass Deutsch Neu*), and mixed (*Geni@!*, *Super*, *TrabiTour*). We conclude that grammar instruction is generally in accordance with findings from FL teaching research in that both inductive and deductive approaches are observed although the inductive introductions are not particularly challenging. The variation in introduction is illustrated for past participle formation. For instance, students must link the verbs in 14 sentences to three types of past participle formation (*Team Deutsch 2*, p. 12):

**Table 1.** Number of inductive/deductive grammar introductions in course materials.

Teaching materials	Deductive	Percentage deductive	Inductive	Percentage inductive
Mach's gut	80	92.0	7	8.0
Na Klar	8	12.7	55	87.3
Neue Kontakte	7	11.7	53	88.3
Salzgitter heute	69	100.0	0	0.0
TrabiTour	51	76.1	16	23.9
Studio Deutsch	3	6.0	48	94.0
Super	10	38.0	18	62.0
Echt!	11	18.0	50	82.0
Kompass Deutsch Neu	18	22.2	63	77.8
Team Deutsch	4	8.0	46	92.0
Geni@!	15	31.3	33	68.8
Planet	2	3.8	50	96.2

- Wann bist du heute aufgestanden?
- Was hast du heute schon gelesen?
- Wann hast du zuletzt dein Zimmer aufgeräumt?

Welche Websites hast du gestern besucht?

Wen hast du gestern getroffen?

Bist du am Wochenende ausgegangen?

Hast du schon mal eine Party organisiert?

Ich habe viele SMS und die Aufgaben im Mathebuch gelesen.

Das habe ich vergessen.

Heute bin ich zu spät aufgestanden und bin zu spät zur ersten Stunde gekommen.

Ja, ich habe an meinem Geburtstag eine Megaparty gemacht.

Ich habe meine Freundin Simone getroffen und wir sind zum Basketballtraining gegangen.

Nein, ich habe zu Hause Musik gehört und Klavier geübt.

Gestern habe ich nur Emails geschrieben.

‘Fill out all the [past participle] forms in the table.’

Verben	-(e)t	-en
einfache Verben: ge-	<i>gemacht</i>	
trennbare Verben: -ge-		<i>aufgestanden</i>
nicht trennbare Verben	<i>besucht</i>	
Verben auf -ieren		

This grammar structure is introduced in an even more guided way in *Neue Kontakte*:

German has three ways to construct past participles. Fill out:

spielen - ..... >> ge + stem + ....., this a weak verb;

trainieren - ..... >> stem + ....., this is a weak verb;

lesen - ..... >> ge + stem + ....., this is a strong verb (*Neue Kontakte* 3/A, p. 10)

*Mach's gut* applies a deductive approach; ‘Study properly what is said in the Helpdesk under C1 (page 120)’ (MG 2, p. 30). The Helpdesk presents the rule and an example. The students are then requested to fill out the participle form of the verbs in sentences:

heißen      Weißt du, wie sie ..... hat?

schneiden      Kurz davor hatte sie sich auch noch .....

Two Dutch books stick to traditional deductive treatment, thus providing the learners with a less varied and cognitively less challenging way of grammar instruction.

**Table 2.** Number of grammar structures in course materials.

Teaching materials	Number of structures
Mach's gut	87
Na Klar	63
Neue Kontakte	60
Salzgitter heute	69
TrabiTour	67
Studio Deutsch	51
Super	48
Echt!	61
Kompass Deutsch Neu	81
Team Deutsch	50
Geni@l	48
Planet	52

*Research question 1c: How is grammar presented regarding the number of grammar structures?*

Table 2 shows the number of grammar structures introduced in each course book and displays differences between Dutch, global, and Finnish teaching materials. Global materials tend to have the smallest number of structures, ranging from 48 to 52 structures. The number of grammar structures is slightly higher in the Finnish materials. Dutch teaching materials generally provide again a few more structures, about 60 to 70. In general, all teaching materials provide a substantial but reasonable number of grammar structures at the beginners level. However, the large number of grammar structures in *Mach's gut* and *Kompass Deutsch Neu* (87 and 81 structures, respectively) shows that these books have a strong focus on form. In so doing, they deviate from the communicative approach that focuses on form but crucially also on content.

*Research question 1d: How is grammar presented regarding the number of grammar exercises?*

An overview of the number of exercises and the number of grammar exercises is provided in Table 3. Finnish course materials clearly contain more grammar exercises (range: 180–237) than Dutch materials (range: 119–155). The global materials provide fewer grammar exercises, ranging from 69 to 125. Furthermore, the Finnish materials include the highest percentage of grammar exercises, ranging from 24.7 to 39.6%, followed by the global course books, ranging from 24.1 to 26.8%. The Dutch materials display the largest variation, ranging from 13.5 to 25.1%. The large number of grammar exercises, especially in the Finnish materials, indicates that accuracy is considered important. These large numbers are somewhat surprising from a communicative perspective that considers ‘successful achievement of the communicative task at least as important as the accuracy of ... language use’ (Harmer, 2007, p. 69). However, caution

**Table 3.** Number of grammar exercises.

Teaching materials	Number of exercises	Number of grammar exercises	Percentage of grammar exercises
Mach's gut	576	143	24.8
Na Klar	987	155	15.7
Neue Kontakte	569	119	20.9
Salzgitter heute	530	133	25.1
TrabiTour	910	123	13.5
Studio Deutsch	728	180	24.7
Super	717	224	31.2
Echt!	631	207	32.8
Kompass Deutsch Neu	599	237	39.6
Team Deutsch	466	125	26.8
Geni@l	264	69	26.1
Planet	390	94	24.1

**Table 4.** Number of portions used in modal introduction.

Teaching materials	Modals (present tense)	Modals (past tense)
Mach's gut	6	2
Na Klar	1	—
Neue Kontakte	4	2
Salzgitter heute	2	1
TrabiTour	1	1
Studio Deutsch	6	—
Super	3	—
Echt!	1	—
Kompass Deutsch Neu	2	—
Team Deutsch	2	1
Geni@l	2	1
Planet	4	1

is in order here. As far as we know, FL learning research has not clarified the relation between the amount of practice and the accuracy reached. For a possible explanation of the observed difference between Finnish and global and Dutch books, the reader is referred to Section VI.

### *Research question 1e: How is grammar presented regarding portioning?*

Table 4 displays the introduction of modals and shows that the introduction of modal verbs is often spread over several chapters, although *Echt*, *Na Klar* and *TrabiTour* display a higher grammar progression rate, choosing to introduce present tense modals as one block. The past tense forms are generally presented in fewer, that is, larger portions, namely one or two. The Finnish books do not include this grammar topic.

**Table 5.** Number of portions used in introducing case-marking prepositions.

Teaching materials	Prepositions with dative, accusative and dative/accusative case marking
Mach's gut	3
Na Klar	3
Neue Kontakte	2
Salzgitter heute	3
TrabiTour	3
Studio Deutsch	6
Super	2
Echt!	4
Kompass Deutsch Neu	6
Team Deutsch	3
Geni@l	2
Planet	2

Table 5 shows the introduction of case marking prepositions. All teaching materials introduce prepositions with dative, accusative, and dative/accusative case in separate portions. The Finnish materials tend to spread these grammar items over more than three chapters, using smaller portions. For example, local and temporal prepositions are presented as separate parts. *Neue Kontakte* and *Geni@l* do not treat all of the three grammar structures as separate grammar issues.

Table 6 presents the introduction of personal and possessive pronouns. Dutch, Finnish, and global teaching materials generally introduce personal pronouns in three blocks and sometimes in two, combining dative and accusative pronouns. A clear difference can be observed with possessive pronouns, in that Finnish course books present these pronouns in portions (singular vs. plural, sometimes 3rd person singular), whereas Dutch and global books introduce them as a block.

Table 7 displays the presentation of adjective declination. We do not encounter any remarkable differences when comparing adjective declination in Dutch, Finnish, and global materials. Adjective declination is either introduced in one or two blocks. Only the Finnish *Kompass Deutsch Neu* is an exception, using four portions. Adjectives without a determiner are only introduced in *Mach's gut* and *Salzgitter heute*, and in both cases they are introduced separately from adjectives with definite and indefinite determiners.

To summarize portioning, the investigated grammar structures are generally introduced in portions. In so doing, the teaching materials reduce the learning load and lower the progression rate. Learning load reduction implies that the teaching materials take the learners and their linguistic competence and learning problems seriously, which aligns with a learner-centered approach to teaching.

However, no patterns are found as to which grammar structures are considered in need of portioning since the books make different choices here. The largest variation is observed with modal verbs, ranging from one to six portions. *TrabiTour* and *Echt* tend to use a higher grammar progression rate than the other materials, often introducing

**Table 6.** Number of portions used in introducing personal and possessive pronouns.

Teaching materials	Nominative, dative and accusative personal pronouns	Possessive pronouns
Mach's gut	3	1
Na Klar	3	1
Neue Kontakte	3	1
Salzgitter heute	2	1
TrabiTour	2	1
Studio Deutsch	3	3
Super	3	3
Echt!	2	2
Kompass Deutsch Neu	3	2
Team Deutsch	3	1
Geni@l	3	1
Planet	3	1

**Table 7.** Number of portions in introducing adjective declination.

Teaching materials	Adjectives with <i>der, ein</i> determiner
Mach's gut	2
Na Klar	–
Neue Kontakte	1
Salzgitter heute	2
TrabiTour	1
Studio Deutsch	–
Super	–
Echt!	1
Kompass Deutsch Neu	4
Team Deutsch	2
Geni@l	1
Planet	2

grammar topics in larger blocks than the others. A clear difference between Finnish on the one hand and Dutch and global materials on the other hand is found concerning possessive pronouns: The former introduces this relatively difficult structure for Finnish learners in smaller portions. The difference between Finnish and Dutch/global teaching materials will be elaborated on in Section VI.

### *Research question 2: What are the observed differences and/or parallels between Dutch, Finnish and global teaching materials?*

The analysed teaching materials display many similarities. First, no striking differences are found between Finnish, Dutch, and global teaching materials when comparing inductive



and deductive grammar instruction. Both approaches are found in all the countries, although the teaching materials in the Netherlands tend to be more deductive in nature. Second, all teaching materials tend to introduce new grammar in portions, incorporating the idea of learning load reduction.

Differences appear with the introduction of pronouns and case marking prepositions: Finnish books use more portions than the Dutch and global ones. Moreover, the Finnish materials explicate and evaluate grammar competences in terms of CEFR like can-do statements. Therefore, the Finnish books can be considered more learner-centered than the Dutch and global ones. On the other hand, the Finnish materials seem more traditional and form-focused since we observe that they present a large number of grammar structures. Moreover, the percentage of grammar exercises is higher than the Dutch and the global books. Section VI addresses the question why Finnish materials differ from the Dutch books in these specific cases.

## VI Discussion

Research question 1 concerns the presentation of grammar regarding location and integration, instructional approach, number of grammar structures and exercises, and portioning. Our results show that there are many similarities between the analysed books although sometimes individual teaching materials or materials from a specific country deviate from the observed patterns. In general, we find inductive as well as deductive approaches to grammar, and grammar introduction is portioned, and integrated into productive exercises with comparable numbers of grammar structures and exercises. We conclude that this way of dealing with grammar supports learner-centered FL teaching with communicative objectives: It assumes active participation of the learner in e.g. constructing knowledge (by inductive learning) and self-assessment (by can-do statements).

Although the teaching materials analysed are all in line with a communicative approach to FL teaching, we have observed two deviations from the communicative teaching method. First, two books provide substantially more grammar structures than the rest. They do not seem to follow the trend of reducing the number of grammar structures as observed in Kwakernaak (1996) and are still strongly form-focused. This is somewhat surprising in communicative language teaching that considers ‘successful achievement of the communicative task at least as important as the accuracy of ... language use’ (Harmer, 2007, p. 69). We cannot preclude the possibility that the prominent position of grammar in the course books exists because this is what the teachers expect and/or want. That teachers want a lot of grammar exercises is confirmed in a classroom observation study by Van Tolie (2015); they even add more grammar exercises to their teaching than the workbook provides. At least for one of the books, namely *Mach’s gut*, the reason for the high number of grammar structures might be related to the year of publication, namely 2003. Not only with respect to the number of structures but also concerning the percentage of grammar exercises and the instructional approach, *Mach’s gut* makes a rather traditional impression.

Second, the Dutch teaching materials tend to practice grammar in isolation, that is, without integrating the structures into productive, communicative exercises. Hence, they do not incorporate insights from FL teaching research on the effectiveness of grammar

exercises such as Ellis (2005), Funk (2014) or Newby (2014). Since access to scientific literature is generally difficult and pricy for non-academics, new insights like these might not have reached the course book authors. This could improve if scientists would translate their research findings into practical implications for teaching and if they would publish in teacher journals. Another suggestion to improve and/or monitor the quality of teaching materials would be to truss the team of course book authors with an academic expert in the field of FL teaching.

In answering Research question 2 ('What are the observed differences and/or parallels between Dutch, Finnish and global course books?') we have seen that the position grammar has in the course books varies. The large amount of grammar in the Finnish teaching materials as opposed to the Dutch and global materials is striking. We have also found that Finnish teaching materials present certain grammar structures in more portions than the Dutch and global ones do. This is the case with pronouns and case assigning prepositions (see also Maijala, 2010). In both cases, Finnish uses a linguistically different structure than German. For instance, Finnish does not have gender distinction with pronouns and lacks the analytical form for possessive constructions, but marks 'possession' as a suffix to the noun. Being unfamiliar with a certain grammar structure might make the structures more difficult for Finns than for Dutch learners, whose L1 is closely related to German. Therefore, more exercises and smaller portions in the introduction of a structure seem to be somewhat self-evident. As far as we can see the above-mentioned differences between Finnish and Dutch teaching materials can be related to the fact that the Finnish language differs structurally from the Germanic languages. Also Ringbom (1987) links difficulty with the typological distance between L1 and the foreign language, L2, in his study of Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking learners of English.

Our inquiry has revealed that grammar still holds a prominent position in teaching materials. However, our findings do not provide the possibility to make direct claims about what really happens with grammar in language teaching classrooms. The teacher plays a significant role in how teaching materials are used in FL classrooms and in how the teaching content is selected, excluded, and sequenced. The teacher selects the content that learners are confronted with (Luke et al., 1989, p. 252) and might change the number of grammar exercises or the instructional approach (see Baten, 2009). On the other hand, teaching materials tend to be guiding in the FL classroom (Garton & Graves, 2014; Gray, 2013; Harwood, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010; Tomlinson, 2012). Sometimes they *are* the curriculum (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). As concluded in Tomlinson (2012), what happens with teaching materials in classrooms is highly unclear; hardly any research has been undertaken in this field, i.e. on the use and effectiveness of teaching materials (see Fäcke, 2016). Future research should investigate whether the prominent position of grammar observed in the course books is reflected in the Dutch and Finnish classrooms and to what extent the course book – besides other factors like e.g. teacher training and teaching experience – influences the curriculum.

In the current study, we have provided a picture of the course books used in Dutch and Finnish secondary education but we are aware of the fact that our selection does not constitute a representative selection of the global GFL course books. A large-scale assessment of more global course books is necessary to make strong claims about this type of materials. Related to this, the restricted sustainability of course book

evaluations might also be cause for concern. Publishing houses tend to produce new editions of the course books about every four to six years and evaluations are soon outdated. What we have seen so far in new editions of teaching materials is that the general concept of the materials remains the same and that other but not revolutionary new emphases are set. We expect that the general position of grammar in a course book will not radically change in new editions of a course book but, say, the exact number of grammar exercises may well be different. This being the case, the results of this study seem to maintain their value also when new releases of course materials are published.

The value of our study lies both in the development of a list of criteria to determine the position of grammar in course books and in the evaluation results. The list of criteria can be applied to other teaching materials in future research. Furthermore, it would be interesting to broaden the perspective and analyse teaching materials for other L1s and for other target languages. On the other hand, we aim at awareness raising through our results. First, course book publishers should become aware of their choice in content selection and their possible impact on the FL classroom. Moreover, our outcomes show to what extent teaching materials incorporate new pedagogical insights and in doing so, foster e.g. inductive or reflective learning. Second, our results inform teachers about the materials they use. This might help them making well-founded choices in their teaching, for example, when teachers rethink their curriculum and consider making adaptations to the teaching materials or when they select new teaching materials. As such, we hope our study can elevate FL teaching and learning.

## VII Conclusions

Our results show that the materials analysed are generally in line with the rationale behind communicative language teaching. On the other hand, grammar occupies a prominent position in all the teaching materials we analysed, especially in the sense that the percentage of grammar is still substantial. However, new pedagogical insights, such as inductive teaching, self-evaluation procedures and learning load reduction through portioning, have been integrated into the teaching materials. Hence, the suggestion that FL teaching is still traditional is only partly confirmed. In fact, the Finnish materials are especially pioneering in this respect: they integrate grammar into productive skill exercises, provide tools for self-evaluation, and use inductive grammar teaching. We hope that our results are an incentive for Dutch publishing houses to adjust their teaching materials regarding grammar and that the Finnish materials inspire them. Likewise, schoolbook publishers in other countries without national admission procedures for teaching materials are invited to cast their eye over the position of grammar in their materials.

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## Notes

1. We are careful in our formulations here since to our knowledge foreign language teaching research does not make claims about the relation between number of grammar exercises and accuracy.
2. In the Netherlands, selection of students takes place when starting secondary education at the age of 12 years. Three streams of secondary education exist: vocational, higher general and pre-university secondary education. Publishing houses produce different course materials for these three types of secondary education.

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